

# Letters to the Editor

Share your thoughts with our community!

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters should be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. **email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com;** Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570



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The mystery of who put up the birdhouses along the Lafayette-Moraga Trail has been solved. We received the following letter from Jil Plummer of Lafayette:

Editor:

I enjoyed the photos and comments about my birdhouses on the side of the Lafayette-Moraga trail. Just to set things straight, my husband put them up some time ago in a moment of whimsy and continued to add to his collection, either making them himself or buying them at garage sales or flea markets. It was fun for us to hear exclamations of discovery, children counting them or knowing they were a destination point for some families. The two featured, with Jill and Bill on them, were birthday gifts from a special trail friend, a couple just "appeared" but mainly they are Bil's. He died of cancer last year but I, with others, still enjoy his bird world.

Thanks,  
Jil Plummer  
Lafayette

Editor:

July, as "World Population Day" is being recognized, is a good time for Lamorindans, as part of the world's third-largest national population, to reflect on what perpetual population growth is doing to the nation they love and the nation their descendants will inherit. Between 1950 and 1970, America added population equivalent to the 1950 populations of all the states from the West Coast to the Mississippi River, including Alaska and Hawaii. Between 1970 and 1990, America added population equivalent to the populations of all the states from Maine to the Appalachians. And between 1990 and 2010, America added population equivalent to the populations of the remaining fifty states . . . plus ten--oh, my--Washington DCs! That's right, as America's population grew for 110 of the past 111 years, we more than doubled our population and tried to build a second America overlaying the existing nation. When we're told we have "short-ages" of water, energy, and other nonrenewable resources, perhaps we should respond, "We have overages of the users of water, energy, and other nonrenewable resources." When we're told our nation is not keeping up with needs for infrastructure--highways, hospitals, bridges, schools--perhaps we should point out, "It's no surprise that we have difficulty duplicating America every 50-60 years." And if we could duplicate America every 50-60 years, is that what we want to do? Is that what our descendants would want us to do? If Lamorindans take a moment in July to reflect on America's perpetual population growth, they may decide such growth is not what we want for ourselves . . . or for our descendants. If you want to learn more about America's addiction to population growth, please visit www.ThinkPopulation.org.

Edward C. Hartman  
Moraga

### Join our Public Forum

If you have significant knowledge about an issue facing Lamorinda or one of its cities that requires more than the 350 words to which we must limit Letters to the Editor, don't despair! You can submit your letter to our Public Forum section. Just send your letter to [letters@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:letters@lamorindaweekly.com) and let us know you'd like to be considered for the Public Forum.

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## Questions with home care? Ask Vanessa

**Daughter who lives far away is concerned for her parents' safety and well-being...**

DEAR VANESSA:

*My parents are getting to that point in their life where they need in-home care to help them function as they had when they were younger and healthier. Our family is spread out all over the state and we have all decided that hiring a "helper/companion" in the home is the best route and everyone is on board with the idea. There are so many choices out there that it has become incredibly overwhelming and we hear horror stories in the news about the bad things that can happen. I want the very best care for my parents and want to feel safe, assured for their safety and well-being, and have the security that they are being treated as if they were with family. What are the best ways for us to find someone, screening we may do, or how to start this process of finding the 'right one' to help with mom and dad? Thank you. CARMEN*

DEAR CARMEN:

Growing old doesn't have to be a complete burden on your parents, you and your siblings; it calls for a bit of extra help. A caregiver can aid in eldercare on many different levels, and depending on your parents' needs, his or her role can provide key benefits.

Ask for referrals from people you know and trust in the medical community (word-of-mouth recommendations are sometimes the best ones). Since time is an issue and in order to keep things simple, hiring a caregiver through a home care agency is a good option. Select an agency that hires caregivers who pass stringent national and local background checks, a seven-year tracking and screening based on addresses and DMV records, and Social Security trace. Their caregivers should be bonded and insured; they should be able to provide extensive references, too. It is very important that the agency you choose provides 24/7 phone support. A good agency will begin the hiring process by providing a free in-home assessment by a care professional. They will determine the level of care that your parents need, discuss hourly or day rates, long-term care insurance, their recruitment and hiring practices, and how you can reach someone after regular business hours in case of emergency. They will then recommend candidates who are suitable for your parents' case and set up an interview or two. Your parents should be included in the interview process. Consider the person most qualified for the job and with whom you and your parents feel most comfortable before making a final decision.

The care plan will be tailored to your parents' specific needs, but remember that your input is vital. Your parents' caregiver will depend on you for information about your parents' condition and needs. Make a list of what the job will entail and what your expectations are for hiring a caregiver. Be as detailed as possible. Be open and honest so they can arrange the best possible care; the best care depends on clear, respectful communication among members. Write down important information the caregiver will have as a reference. Include details on the care recipients, the home and emergency protocols. Keep a copy in a central place in the home. Adapt your parents' home for safety by making appropriate changes as soon as possible. Work to develop a good relationship with the caregiver. He or she will be your eyes and ears, and can observe and update you on areas of nutrition, hygiene, activity level, services and other daily issues. Don't forget to create a support system--people who live nearby who may be willing to help. Consider friends, relatives, church or community service groups.

Take heart and be present in your parents' lives. Write or phone regularly and visit when you can. Caring for your parents is not only a responsibility--it is a privilege. Serving their needs has its own reward; you will find your family relationships enriched. **VANESSA**

Got Questions & Answers about Home Care is written by Vanessa Valerio, RN, VP and COO for Patient Care at Home Care Orinda. If you would like more information about senior care and how home care can help, please email Vanessa Valerio at [vanessav@careindeed.com](mailto:vanessav@careindeed.com), call her at (925) 317-3080 or visit their website at [www.homecareorinda.com/](http://www.homecareorinda.com/).